

SATURDAY, FEB. 24, 1872.

Subject: Do the Scriptures Forbid Women to Preach?

PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

SERMONS

PREACHED BY

HENRY WARD BEECHER.



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DO THE SCRIPTURES FORBID WOMEN TO PREACH ?

“ Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church.”—I. COR. XIV., 34, 35.

There is a passage in the 1st of Timothy (II. 11, 12) which is nearly equivalent to this :

“ Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

The recent events which have taken place in this city have been of profound interest to the members of the communion in which they took place, not only, but they have, in connection with a long train of tendencies developed in late years, arrested the attention and interested the thoughts of the whole community. A woman who was a regular preacher in a Christian sect was asked to preach in a Presbyterian pulpit in this city, and complied with the request. Her fitness for that service was unquestioned. She had long spoken in churches; and the seal of divine favor had followed this apparent infraction of the command of the apostle Paul; for edification had followed, and that was the sign which Peter said was to authenticate the various means which should fall out in the newer times of the Gospel. For permitting a woman preacher to occupy his pulpit, an esteemed and honored pastor* was brought before a special meeting of his Presbytery, and, out of tenderness to him, and out of regard for his long and admirable service in the church, his conduct was passed by without rebuke; but the churches were substantially enjoined not to do so any more, but to take heed to the past declarations of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian

* Rev. Theo. L. Cuyler, DD.

SUNDAY EVENING, Feb. 11, 1872. Lesson: 1 SAM. II. 1-11. Hymns, (Plymouth Collection) Nos. 737, 306, 1294.

Church on this matter, which forbade women to exercise their gifts as public teachers.

The simple question, then, before us, is this : Whether in the New Testament women are forbidden to teach and to preach in public assemblies. It is not a question whether the Bible ought to have permitted them to do it. It is not the question which I shall discuss to-night, whether they are qualified for it. Certainly it is not the question as to their more extended capabilities and rights and permissions in the future. I propose, on this Lord's day, to argue what are the rights and duties or limitations laid down in the Word of God on the subject of women's teaching and preaching publicly.

Are those words of Paul, which I have read, of universal application in our time and everywhere ? And are they final ?

There are three views of this matter. First, there are those who regard this utterance as official and conclusive, and who therefore forbid women to speak, no matter how gifted they are. They accept the Word of God as the rule of faith and practice ; and they accept this utterance as meant to cover the whole future, and to determine the condition of women generally ; and they comply with it. However much we may differ from them in opinion, we honor their consistency.

Secondly, there are those who regard this testimony as explicit, covering the whole question in all time, but who do not believe in the authority of the apostle to settle the question. They say simply this : " Paul forbade them, but he had no business to." This is an easy deliverance so far as they are concerned.

Then, thirdly, there are those who admit the binding authority of Scripture upon faith and practice when its meaning is fairly and finally interpreted, but who regard this command as local, national, and transient. They hold, as much as the first, to the authority of sacred Scripture ; but they differ from them, by supposing that this is one of the transient commands which was enforced only in a particular place, and for a particular reason, and at a particular time ; and that it is not the utterance of Christianity ; that it is not the final word spoken on this subject. I am of the number of those who hold this view.

1. It was not the design of Christianity to determine manners and customs, nor to determine the forms of civil government, nor to determine the shapes and peculiarities of religious ordinance or institution, nor to mark out the whole future economy of human society. It did not undertake to build by the external at all.

Christianity aimed at a spiritual development of man by bringing him into direct relations with God. Its aim was a new creature in Christ Jesus ; a noble manhood ; assemblies and communities made up of men of a larger pattern, and of endowments supereminent and supreme over any that had ever been known before. To this corrected and inspired manhood was left the utmost liberty in respect to external things. It was left free to determine all economies in the church, in the school, in the family, and in the state, according to the mature experiences of good men from age to age.

There can be no greater imposition attempted upon the just sense of common men than to affirm that there is in the New Testament, either in the Gospels or the Epistles, a pattern of any external part of the church, or of the state in which we live, or of the domestic economy under which we are reared. All these things are foreign to the spirit and genius of Christianity. They have been superimposed upon it, built upon it, by a later spirit—a mongrel and not a Christian spirit—a spirit that is semi-heathen, and altogether human. Whatever relates to the interior purity of man ; whatever belongs to universal morality ; whatever is necessary to man everywhere, in all ages and under every condition—that was determined and fixed in Christianity. It was not left to take care of itself. The informing Spirit, the Spirit of life, organizes all the necessary instruments of life.

This view is corroborated by the whole testimony of history. The modern church is totally different from the assemblies of the first Christians. There was no Christian church outside of the Jewish, until long after the death of all the apostles. There was none in Christ's life ; he took no disciples out of the Jewish church. There was none in the apostles' time ; they took none out of the Jewish church. They themselves were regular orthodox members, attending the Jewish church as long as they lived. And when Paul, some twenty years after his pastorate began in Jerusalem, was suspected of having gone outside of the limits of that church, he, in order to prove that it was prejudice, and that he was orthodox, went into the temple and performed sacrificial offerings according to the manner of the Jews.

The civil state has been revolutionized since the time of Christ. The family has changed. Our household is not a transcript of the Jewish household. Certainly it is not a transcript of the Roman household. The domestic organization does not stand on civil foundations as it did in the time of Christ and the apostles. It is changed. There is no one element of organization that now resembles the organizations of two thousand years ago any more than species resemble species under the same genus.

The presumption is that under such circumstances, when Christianity was leaving everything else to the wisdom and experience of after times, it did not step in with this single exception and fix the position of woman, and determine exactly what her privileges were beyond which there should be no exception, and shut her mouth, and paralyze her tongue forever after.

It will be found the only instance in which such a thing as this has been done in New Testament history—if it was done. It will be contrary to the genius of Christianity in every other direction. That left the whole of household matters to be fixed outside of itself. That left the whole of the civil affairs of the world to be managed outside of itself. That left all the elements of human society to flow on without its control. That left all the interests of the age and time to be conducted in accordance with man's judgment and experience. And did it put its finger on this one solitary exception, and erect that into a monument of interference and exact fixity? Such an absolute and universal limitation could not have taken place without violence to the Jewish ideas. For, first, woman, among the Hebrews, was far more nearly equal to man than in other Oriental nations—certainly than among the Greeks. And, so far as we can discern, with some peculiarities of costume and manner woman among the Hebrews was more nearly what woman is with us than among any other ancient nation. She was not in such a sense a servant as she was among the Greeks. She was not jealously veiled, being forbidden to uncover her face in public. She was not excluded from public service and public function. She was a public instructor among the Jews.

Earliest, we find Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron, who, when the great deliverance befel Israel, was the one who led in the song of triumph; and so far from meeting rebuke, inspired with religious fervor she gave utterance to the nation's joy. Instead of being rebuked for stepping out of the sphere of woman, her song is recorded, and has been sounding down for four thousand years.

Deborah was not simply a prophetess—that is, a teacher: she was a judge in Israel—that is, a ruler. In those early times, and particularly in the then despised and broken-up condition of the Hebrew commonwealth, here was a woman of great influence, of great power, who rose to the public service; and she ruled her people. A kind of Joan of Arc she was. Though Barak was king, he was under subjection to the Egyptians and she roused him up to break the yoke, and achieve a triumph. You will find an account of this in the fourth chapter of Judges.

I read in the opening service the outpouring of Hannah as she

stood praying. She gave utterance to that song which is recorded in the second chapter of the first book of Samuel.

Then there was Huldah, in the time of Jeremiah. She was more than simply a prophetess; for, when the king desired to consult about things of great moment he passed by Jeremiah, and went to Huldah. Helkiah the priest, Ahikam, and others that the king had appointed, went to Huldah, as we might say that Bro. Cuyler went to this woman preacher, and communed with her; and she said:

"Thus saith the Lord of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me, Thus saith the Lord, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah; Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched. And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard; because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard thee also, saith the Lord. Behold I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word."

It seems that she lived in the college in Jerusalem, that she was a prophetess, and that she was entrusted with the instruction of the young prophets who were accustomed in those times to undergo a kind of theological education.

So, too, in the very time of Christ, Anna, the prophetess, stood in the temple where she lived, and broke forth into praise, and gave God thanks for the appearance of the promised Messiah that she believed had come.

Thus, when a Jew looked back upon his history, while he rejoiced at the glory of Solomon, and celebrated the achievements of David; while he honored the magistracy of Samuel, and gloried in all the offices of Aaron and Moses; and while he was proud of the memories of Abraham, he included in the same category the names of the Miriams, the Deborahs, and the Huldahs. There were familiar instances in past history of the patriotic glory of women who had stood up in different ages to hold the sceptre, to judge Israel, and to teach, and, being inspired of God, to pour forth prophecies that embraced both present and prospective events.

When, therefore, at the Pentecost, Peter gave the programme of the future, did he reverse, or did he confirm, this national peculiarity? Would he be understood by those who listened to that

memorable speech of his as putting women to silence in the churches? Let us see. They were charged with being drunken. When, under the influence of the divine Spirit, inspiration was wrought upon them, men not understanding what it was, thought that they must be drunken; but Peter said,

“These are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day [nine o'clock in the morning], but this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your *daughters* shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; and on my servants and on my *hand-maidens*. I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy.”

Now, to *prophesy*, in its original and highest sense, was to perceive beforehand, to foretell; but in its more ordinary sense, it was to teach, to instruct. You will observe that the prophet Joel declared, as quoted by Peter, without any limitation or explanation, that God should pour out, in the latter-day, his spirit upon all flesh, that sons and *daughters* should prophesy, and that on servants and on *handmaidens* should be poured out the divine Spirit.

So then, not only were the Jews accustomed to the instruction of women, but to instruct was enjoined on women. It was declared that they *should* do it. Here is their call, and here is their authentic charter. When the Spirit of God rests upon them, and they have a message to give, and their heart burns in them, if you undertake to set up the letter of Paul around about them, I set up the letter of the Holy Ghost, which says, *On my handmaidens will I pour out my spirit; and they shall prophesy.*

I know that in the synagogue it was forbidden women to teach; and I know the reason why. The synagogical service was not one of extemporary effusion. It was liturgical and expository. It consisted in the chanting of psalms, and what not, and in the reading of the text of Scripture, with such ritualistic exposition as had been provided by the Rabbis. As women had not the necessary technical education, they were not admitted to the performance of service in the synagogue; but outside of the synagogue, when they had an inspiration of moral feeling, it was not against the Hebrew public sentiment, but eminently in accordance with it, that they should speak out—and speak in *meeting*, too.

2. It is a remarkable fact, in view of these statements, that the limitations of speech in the word of God are not made in the Gospels, which are the grand fountain out of which all the epistles flow. There is nothing in the Gospels which, by the least implication, places any limits to the position, the rights or the duties of women. Nor is there in any of the letters of the apostles to Jewish assemblies

of Christians anything which condemns this Jewish custom. There is not one word which seems designed to change that custom.

3. Only to Greek churches was there such limitations upon women's rights or privileges. Only in the letters of Paul to the Corinthians—to the people in fellowship there—is this forbidding clause found, except when he wrote to Timothy in regard, especially, to the churches of Asia Minor. In both instances the proscriptions were addressed, not to Jewish but to Grecian assemblies of Christians. Not that there were not traces of Jews among them—there were; but the mass were essentially Greek; the customs of the community were Greek.

It becomes necessary, now, that we should ask, Why was it that when the apostle addressed Jewish assemblies of Christians he said nothing about women's silence, and that when he addressed Greek assemblies of Christians he enjoined it? Let us look at the condition of woman among the Greeks. It was degraded to an extent that we can scarcely conceive of. The highest thought of womanhood that the Greeks had, was that a woman should remain at home in seclusion, the absolute and literal slave of her husband; that she should serve him and his household; that her life should be one of simple domesticity; that she should not be known beyond the limited sphere of the family; and that she should confine her occupation to the manufacture of embroidery, the preparation of food, and the direction of the servants or slaves of the household. Beyond this sphere she should not go one step. And I speak literally when I say that the Greek idea of woman's virtue was that she should not rise above the level of domestic knowledge and function. She was not expected even to go to the door to meet her husband when he came home, lest she should be seen. She was not permitted to go into the street unless she was wrapped and veiled. For a woman in Greece to sit with unveiled face or uncovered head in a public place, was to destroy her reputation for virtue. For a woman there to do what is done by women in modern civilized nations; for a woman to develop in herself that which now the poorest man in the community toils with the utmost self-denial to give to his daughters; for a woman to learn poetry, and music, and art, and philosophy, and to be known to possess a knowledge of these things—this was to stamp her, in the eyes of all men, as a courtesan. No woman in Greece was permitted to become versed in any of those things which we call the refinements and embellishments of education, except at the price of her reputation for virtue. A virtuous woman in Greece was an ignorant domestic drudge. An enlightened woman, competent to conversation, and to what we regard the higher walks of

civilization, was understood, universally, to be accessible as a courtesan.

About this there is no mistake. The proofs of it are overwhelming. The illustrations of it one might spend the whole night in detailing to you. I merely make the general statement.

Such being the position of women, such being the popular feeling and the popular custom in regard to them, what would have been the effect, if, when the Christian assemblies had been gathered together, and the heathen Greeks had been around about looking in upon the worship, a woman had risen up in meeting, and, with open face and uncovered head, had begun to pour out her heart? "That is the sort of worship you have, is it?" the Greek would have said. "That is Christianity, is it? Why, then, the church is nothing but a vast house of orgies; and the gospel sets people free from decency." He would have gone home saying, "I understand your new religion. It teaches our wives that they must forsake their virtue, and go out into public exposure, and do as courtesans do." Therefore it was that Paul said, substantially, to the Greek Christians, "You shall not violate the customs of your country. You shall not bring into discredit the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ by doing that which can be interpreted but in one direction by every man who sees it. I forbid your women to teach"—in *Greece*. Would that he had put that in! If he had only known how stupid people were going to be in our day he would have done it!

The same is true with respect to the injunction which he left in the hands of Timothy.

What, then, may be considered a fair interpretation of this? Is it right to say that the apostle was here uttering the last word which the genius of Christianity had for women in all their future history, and throughout all the world? Are you to take a command which was specific to a degraded community, and which had a peculiar interpretation in that community, and in not another province on the globe, and make it the criterion for judging of woman's position and instruction in every nation? Shall this be done where Christianity has whelmed such degradation, sinking it deeper than Pharaoh was sunk in the Red Sea, and where Christianity has inspired woman, and raised her position, and she has become a poetess, a writer of history, and is walking in the realms of literature, even affecting the condition of the whole generation? Shall you undertake to put that manacle which belonged to the apostate degradation of the Greek period upon the limbs of an enfranchised womanhood? Is that the way to interpret the record of Christianity?

You all smiled when I read the passage, "Let your women keep silence in the churches:" why do not you laugh now? Is that God's message to the Jews and to the race? You might as well say that the command of the physician to the poor leper of the leprosy-house, directing him to cleanse his scabs and sores, and telling him just what he shall do, is the prescription that you are to take care of your children by. Are hospitals patterns for universal hygiene?

I do not say that I scorn or condemn men who have interpreted this otherwise—"The times of this ignorance God winked at;" but hereafter, if a man with such facts as these clearly before him, shall so change this injunction as to make it the utterance of Christianity, I may love and honor him, but I shall marvel at that providence which often makes wise men so foolish!

I honor brother Cuyler because he had the courage to ask Miss Smiley into his pulpit. He acted along the very meridian line of the genius of Christianity. And when he was called to account for it, I would that he had stood up as boldly as Peter did when he was arraigned for teaching in the name of Christ, and said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." However, all men cannot do all things.

One of the most remarkable things which I observe in the casuistry of Christian men, is the facility with which they will reason in a certain way on all matters in which it is convenient for them to reason in that way, and the stubbornness and tenacity with which they will refuse to reason in a given way when it is not exactly in the line of their convenience.

For instance, we are all commanded to "honor the king." Not the command in regard to baptism is plainer than that in regard to honoring the king. But do you honor the king? Will you do it? We have kicked the king overboard. Is that honoring him? Was not the alleged duty of honoring the king the point at issue in all the struggles of England? How did old Southey thunder out of that fortress for the divine right of kings! How did he lecture and lampoon men for the heresy of having betrayed God's word! How he laid down the law of God, as so many letters to spell out, "Honor the king." But if you have not a king, how can you fulfil that command? It is not convenient or agreeable for us to honor the king and so we do not think that command is binding upon us; but there are men who do find it convenient or agreeable to recognize as binding the command, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." They do not have any trouble in dishonoring a king,

and they would fight as bravely as you or I would to keep him off; and yet they are shocked at the idea of a womans speaking in meeting.

Let us look at this passage in Timothy, a portion of which I have read to you:

"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting. In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel."

I do not find that there is any such literal construction insisted upon in this matter, when dresses are worn too short at the top and a world too long at the bottom; or too short at the bottom and not long enough at the top. Fashion rules; and no person has any interpretation to offer on that subject. How will you get over that?

"In like manner, also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shame-facedness, and sobriety; not with braided hair—"

Oh, ho! Here is another piece of wickedness that the church ought to sit in judgment on! Women should be called to account for braiding their hair!

"Not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array."

Where are your literalists? Where are the persons who are attired in silk and satin? Where are the persons whose hands are weighed down with rings, who wear jeweled necklaces, and who have all manner of glowing gems on their cincture? Where are the men who shall bring these persons to judgment? Where is the Presbytery which shall call forth these culprits and see that they are duly censured? Why did not the Presbytery of Brooklyn, that arraigned the honored and beloved pastor, Doctor Cuyler, for asking a woman to speak who was divinely led to speak and whose speaking had been blessed of God—why did they not call on this good brother to bring out those women in his church who braid their hair, and wear diamonds, and pearls, and rubies, and opals, and all manner of jewels? "But," say people, "the apostle did not mean that." Oh no, he did not mean what you do not want to have him mean; he only meant what you do want to have him mean!

There were outrageous vanities in the time of the apostle, and he rebuked, and justly rebuked, those persons who were empty-pated, silly-headed, and who stood entirely on gewgaws, and the various fashions; but do you suppose he meant that it was wrong for a person to braid the hair, or to wear any jewelry? I do not. I regard it as a stroke at the fashion of those churches which existed at that time. I, too, would inveigh against extravagance. I do with my eye, and my thoughts. I think that fashion is a despotic tyrant. When once a person has drunk this sorceress' cup, they have

drunk to insanity; and nothing can prevent it. All creation could not keep an ordinary woman from following the fashion to a greater or less extent. And against extravagance, against excessive addiction to vanity and dress, the apostle bore witness. But he did not bear witness against taste or love of beauty. He did not bear witness against personal embellishments where they were compatible with reason and purity and virtue. Do you suppose that where there is an inward power of goodness, persons are harmed by these outward adornments? I do not.

The same is true in respect to slavery, as it is in respect to monarchy. The whole tenor of the New Testament is to enjoin upon men the appropriate duties of the station in which they are living, that station to be determined by the course of events.

Not long ago men said that black slavery was permissible. Because it was not reprehended in the Word of God, they countenanced it. But even when men were arguing in favor of black slavery they were never heard to argue in favor of white slavery. The idea of a white man's being a slave never entered into their head. But in the time when these words were written, nearly all slaves were white. They were captives gathered from Gaul and the Oriental nations. There were some African and Ethiopian slaves; but the great bulk of the slaves of the Roman Empire were white men. And yet, you never could have persuaded a man in our country that white slavery was right. This is another instance going to show that interpreters of the Bible follow closely their own wishes and prejudices.

The tendency of Christianity is not to put men in the positions which they occupied in the Grecian nation. On the contrary, the effect of the preaching of Christianity and its silent working has been to produce exactly the opposite state of things to that which existed in the time of the apostle. In other words, the providence of God is in conflict with this rigid interpretation of the Pauline language.

Women have now risen out of degradation. They are not slaves of men. They are neither literally bought and sold, nor are they in civilized countries, to any such degree as formerly, subject to the arbitrary will or despotism of men. They have risen to partnership. The man and the woman are one. The theory of the New Testament on this subject, is, that they marry into each other; that they are not to be considered as separate. The woman carries the husband in her; and the husband carries the wife in him. They are not to be disjoined. They are one in the Lord. They are interchangeable. If you consider them individually, they both govern,

and they both obey, in the spirit of true love. There is neither *thine* nor *mine* with them. It is *ours*, which swallows up both *thine* and *mine*.

Woman has risen out of the household, and has become a teacher in the world. You cannot give a rigid interpretation to the language of the apostle, and apply it to woman, without running against the whole fruit of civilization for the last several hundred years. I want to know whether now a woman who writes books is acting in the spirit of Paul's injunction to the Grecian church. Is a poetess, who is singing to all the ages that shall hear her, acting in the spirit of this injunction in the letter of Paul to the Greek Church?

Why, Christianity is changing the age. We are no longer barbarians or semi-barbarians. Woman herself has justly enjoyed, to a surprising degree, the advantages of Christianity. As she was in a condition to be the most changed, she has been the most benefited. As a wife and mother she occupies a nobler place. In a multitude of functions she has the prospect of a richer life before her. And are you going to undertake to push two hundred years' growth of the oak tree back into the acorn from which it sprang? Are you going to put back the shadow on the dial? Are you going to turn the tide of civilization? Is it again to be adopted, in our time, as a rule, that a woman is to know nothing outside of her own family? Is she worse or better for ignorance? She who is in sympathy with all that concerns husbands and fathers and sons is the most fit to rear her own sons.

Woman, by the providence of God, by the stimulation of Christianity, and by the natural unfolding of human affairs, is brought to be again a prophetess—that is, a teacher; and the career is not stopped. There is to be more of it, rather than less. That there should be aberrations, exaggerations, mistaken theories, and instances here and there that are offensive to taste, is not strange. Is it not true that in every age of the world men have gone forward toward that which was good with uncertain step; that they have crept as in the darkness? And is it strange that persons do not know how to philosophize at once upon their rights, and upon the mistakes that are incident to them? These mistakes are what in children are called *growing pains*.

It is perfectly fair to apply to this subject—the speaking of women in public assemblies—the argument which the apostle Peter himself, in the eleventh chapter of Acts, applied to the carrying of the Gospel to the Gentiles—a thing which at that time was considered a gross heresy. Peter you know was, by a vision, sent to the

Roman Centurion, Cornelius, who was waiting for instruction. He preached the Gospel to him, and baptized him, and received him, as it were, into the arms of Christianity, and went back to the other apostles, and told them what he had done; and they were aghast at this novelty. And Peter argued with them, and said,

“As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then rembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch, then, as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I that I could withstand God? When they heard these things they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

They could hardly believe it; but they yielded up the argument, and admit that the Gentiles, if the Holy Ghost had fallen on them, were to be saved.

Now, I say that if, in the providence of God, women are called to preach; if they show that they are fitted for the work; if mankind are called to hear them; if their discourse is accompanied with power from on high; if men who are in darkness are enlightened; if men who are living in torpidity are inspired with a new desire for a holier life, and they reform; then the Holy Ghost bears witness to the validity of the ordination, and to a woman's right to speak.

What is the fact? Is there another denomination in which the Christian spirit is carried to a higher degree than among the *Friends*, as they call themselves? Can there be found, in the whole galaxy of Christian men and women, from the time of Christ and the Marys down to our day, more lovely specimens of Christian character than are to be found among them? And yet, from the first, women have been authorized preachers among the Friends. Miss Smiley is an authorized preacher among them. She finds that she has the ability to preach, and God follows her preaching with the blessing of the Holy Ghost; and these facts are accepted by her denomination as evidence that she is fitted for the calling.

In Methodist meetings, all over the United States, and throughout the world, has it not been the fact, from the beginning, that when women were moved by the Spirit of God, they were permitted to bear witness to their experience, and to exhort? And has there not been abundant fruit growing out of this liberty?

Is it not true that in the Baptist Church, (particularly in the interior and in the far West,) women have been permitted to take part in conference meetings, and to minister publicly in holy things, by speech. And has not the Holy Ghost borne witness, not adverse to this permisson but in favor of it? Are the churches in which this has

occurred now taking away the liberty of women to speak in religious assemblies? Are they not, rather, becoming more convinced than ever that it is in accordance with the mind and will of God? And when the Spirit itself bears witness, in fruit, to the right of women to speak, who are we, that we should stand up and resist God, on no better foundation, and with no better argument, than the local command made to a degraded Greek community, where women had been so wickedly abused that it was necessary to refuse to allow them to take that part in the ministration of the Gospel which ordinarily belonged to Hebrew women?

I take the universal truth which Paul lays down in Galatians (III.27,28) as the Christian doctrine of conduct in the future:

"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek."

Nationalities may exist as shadowy names; but that old spirit must die out under Christianity which makes you feel that America is a better nation than Great Britain, or than France, or than Germany, and that you will do everything for America, and will rather, on the whole, take pleasure in hurting or weakening these contiguous nations. The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of universal brotherhood. Though you may retain national names and distinctions as matters of convenience, the spirit of humanity should rise higher than these things, and nations should be united together in sympathy.

Those agitators, the Internationals, are seeking this in a blind and rude way. I would that they knew a better way. But they are striking a bottom-chord which vibrates through the nations of the earth. The workingmen of the world, neglected by priests and rulers on every side, are endeavoring to reach out their hands to each other, so that the British working-man, and the French workingman, and the American working-man shall be united, and so that, when crowned heads and ambitious rulers attempt to go to war, the under classes shall have the power to lift up their voice, and say, "We will not slay our brethren." For that single testimony I will bear patiently a thousand troubles, and a thousand ignorances among them. They have struck a grand note for which the ages have been waiting, and which the church in its organized ecclesiastical forms has never yet intoned.

Oh, that we could see the hand and the presence of divine Providence even when it does not come in the shape expected! Oh, that there were that moral sensibility which should enable us to recognize the Christian doctrine of equality!

"There is neither Jew nor Greek. There is neither bond nor free."

Distinctions cease, and are forgotten,

"There is neither male nor female."

Morality, faith, hope, love, fidelity, honor, service, eloquence, art, literature, learning—these have no sex. They belong to whomsoever can have them. If God built woman to sing, there is nothing in the heaven above, nor in the earth beneath, that should check her song. Sing she may; for she has in her own heart God's charter. If woman can paint or carve, no man shall say, "This does not belong to womanhood." Why did God give the inspiration then? Whatever is right in this world is sexless, in this sense, that it belongs to everybody, and to everybody alike—to man and to woman; to whomever has in him or her the impulse to help, to enlighten, to lift up, to purify. Whoever can bring the kingdom of God nearer to men, or men nearer to the kingdom, in God's name, and in the spirit of an enfranchised Christianity, let him live, let him work, let him build. If judicatories and laws and customs are interposed, if precedents and conventions and rituals are pleaded, blast them all! Let that new spirit, that larger life, that bright fruit of final Christianity in this world, hang upon the bough where God's sun has ripened it, and let this broader and nobler liberty be for the life and the glory of the latter days.

I am asked, then, "Do you think that a woman may speak in meeting?" No, unless she has something to say. But if she has that to say which, being said, men are glad to hear, and are benefited by, she ought to have the privilege of saying it. The objection which is pleaded against women's speaking, is its interference with her gentler and more refined offices. If she can mediate humanity by public services, I would have her do it; but I would not transmute her nature. I do not ask a woman to become a man. The beauty would then be gone. I would have her retain all that sweetness, all those instinctive delicacies, all that refinement of the inward life and affection, which are peculiar to her.

Because I would cull a lily of the valley from its half-shade and shelter, and bring it into the house, that it may diffuse its fragrance abroad, do I want to transmute it into a huge sunflower? It is because it is so sweet, because it is what it is, that I do cull it, and bring it in, and put it where I can see it.

I ask no transmutation of woman into a virile nature. I do not ask her to take on the robust ways of men. This I say: We have trumpets enough; let us have flutes. We have harsh, stentorous music enough; let us have something softer and sweeter.

There are some chords that a mother's voice can touch, and none

others can. When Lucretia Mott once began to address an unmannerly assembly of young medical students, they laughed and sneered for a little time; but soon they hushed down and listened attentively, and finally almost reverentially looked up to her as a matron and a mother. She spoke to them as she would have spoken to her own son. Would you have said to her, "Keep silence"?

If one is called to absolute domesticity let her follow that calling. If you do not wish to speak, and you are not desired to speak, you are not called to speak. If home, and the joy of wedded love, and the care of the nursery, and the right training of the young, are pointed out as your duty, rejoice in it. I would not pluck you out of it. Whatever your sphere may be on earth, if you have faithfully performed the duties of that sphere, God will smile on you. And if you have brought up a family of boys and girls to an honorable manhood and womanhood, you will be honored in the heavenly land. But if God has given you a heart and a soul for something other; if you are not called to serve in the household, as many are not; if you are set apart from it by sorrows or dissolving bereavement; if in your ripe age you discover that you have talents which you have not before suspected; if in maidenhood or womanhood you have the voice of the singer, or the pen of the poet, or the lips of inspired eloquence, then there is nothing in God's word, nothing in your nature, and nothing in the true church of Christ, in the best interests of society, that should hinder you from exercising those gifts. On the contrary, there is much in history, much in the community, much in you, and much in the witness of the Holy Ghost, that should inspire you to go forward, patiently and meekly bearing the scoffs and persecutions of your fiery adversaries, and work according to the power which God has given you, and work to the end, and rise to be crowned, and to shine as the stars in the firmament, because you have turned many from their sins to righteousness.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We draw near to thee, our Father, rejoicing to believe that thou hast toward us that love and that gladness of soul which bring love and gladness from us in return. As once thou didst confer life, thou canst give to us life again—even the spirit-life. Thou canst by thy heart give to us a new heart; and by love thou canst teach us the supereminence of divine love in us. Thou canst teach us to love one another, even as thou dost love us. What is there that thou canst behold in us—thou before whom the angels are charged with folly; before whom all the bright processions of the eternal world, and all the glories of immortality do pass? What is there that thou canst behold in us, just emerging from our earth-life, full of rudeness, full of imperfections and infirmities, full of sins and transgressions of every name? What is there that thou canst behold in us, marred by sin, staggering hither and thither in every endeavor which we make to walk upon the right way? There is nothing in our being that is lovable in thy sight. There is nothing in our character that we can bring to thy service which shall cheer thee and comfort thee. It is because thou art God that thou dost have compassion on us. It is because to be God is to love with everlasting love, pouring out up on all things that are created and are struggling in existence onward and upward, something of thine own nature. We stand in the royalty of thy love toward us. Our hope of salvation is not in that which we are, nor in that which we can do, but in the friendship of God. It is the gift of thine heart. It is because thou art so generous, and so full of ineffable tenderness, that we hope. It is the royalty of God's nature that shall confer salvation upon us. We rejoice in the greatness of thy being, and in this revelation of the inward nature of God. We rejoice that God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it. We rejoice that Christ was willing to descend from the glory of the eternal estate, and bear our condition and likeness and experience, and to be tempted in all points like as we are—yet without sin. And we are glad now he has reascended, not to forget, but to remember that he lives a Prince and a Saviour.

A Saviour-Prince thou art, at the right hand of God, O Christ, from whom we are named; and thou standest for us, to intercede and to succor. Thou dost administer the power of God unto those, for their welfare, who come unto thee, and seek to be joined to thee. We rejoice that we have had some faith, and the ministration of some love, and that we have been succored in the midst of temptations of selfishness and pride, and all the evil things which surround us in this world. We rejoice that in the great flood which sweeps men away, thou hast come walking to us, and taken us by the hand, and given us rescue and release, and brought us somewhat nearer to thee. But how far, yet, are we from bearing the image of God in our hearts! How far are we from being in concord with the spirits of the blest in the heavenly land! But we are seeking; we are on our journey; we are looking up and hoping for the day of deliverance and perfection; and we rejoice, O Lord Jesus, in that faithfulness of thine which has conducted us, and which shall conduct us to the very end.

Now, we pray that thou wilt grant the forgiveness of all our sins; the peace which comes from pardon; the encouragement and hope and cheer which come from the descent of the Holy Ghost upon our souls.

Grant, we pray thee, that we may this evening listen to the counsels of thy word, and seek to know the things that are true. And grant that in all the week which is begun we may endeavor to carry out the spirit of Christ among men, and everywhere let our light shine. May we be leaders among men in meekness, and gentleness, and truth, and goodness. May we be de-

livered from the evils of temptation, and from its outbursts. May we not be carried away captive by it. May we endeavor to deliver the captives around about us. May we, in all our labor upon earth, still hear the sound of that other world which seems so far off, but which is so near. And grant that we may so live from day to day and from year to year that at last, when death shall come, we may break through the narrow partition which separates us, and appear in Zion and before God.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

Our Father, we pray that thou wilt add thy blessing to the word of exposition and exhortation which we have spoken. Lead us in the right path. Not alone may we read the letter—the old record; but may we read, also, thy perpetual revelation among men—the unfoldings of the history and experience of holy men, from generation to generation. So may we know the truth, and the whole truth; and may the truth make us wise unto salvation.

Wilt thou accept the service of this day. Bless us as we sing once more to thy praise; bless us in our households; bless us everywhere; and at last bring us home to thee in the heavenly land, for Christ Jesus' sake. *Amen.*

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
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